

## "FIFTH NETWORK CINQUIEME RESEAU" CONFERENCE ON BROADCASTING, CABLE, SATELLITES AND COMPUTERS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE VIA ALTERNATIVE AND INDEPENDENT VIDEO

The "Fifth Network Cinquieme Reseau" conference, otherwise known as the Video Conference of Independent Producers held in Toronto in September this year (see Salter's article in this issue) was at once interesting, nostalgic and anachronistic as a harbinger of a new world that has not arrived. **It included people** who were serious students of experimental, alternative and community media -- government and ex-government, professional, amateur and dilettante, and people who are usually styled video freaks. **The latter was evident when part of the audience began batting colored balloons back and forth, no doubt for camera effects, while speakers were talking.**

Among the speakers was Aani Palliser, Ottawa, of the Inuit Tapirsat on the subject of TV Satellite transmissions to the North. TV does indeed play modeling and status-conferral roles as she noted how the children were calling each other Cookie Monster and how they wanted to speak English rather than their native language after watching the CBC. The community hall, once a busy centre, was now empty. She cited one example of a woman who asked at the store for the man from Glad. "It was kind of funny, but sad," she said. **Requests to the CBC for funds to help Pond Inlet produced nothing.**

Henry McGee of Telesat Canada described the hardware of his system, the technical reason why Baffin Island got St. John's news, and observed that the costs on satellite relays are on a straight line - that is, they don't increase in cost like telephone calls according to the distance covered. **To phone your neighbour via satellite across the street costs the same amount as phoning from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, to Whitehorse in the Yukon.**

Another way of looking at it is that it will not cost any more to phone around the earth when the technology is in place than to make a local call. That is, if the commercial hawks don't sit on satellite transmission. (Telesat Canada is 51% owned by the Telephone Company consortium). **McGee told the meeting that the portable earth station had been used at the recent Commonwealth games in Edmonton; portables were becoming important. In view of the technological and therefore human revolutions being created by lightweight media they are very important. Anik B, he said, will be launched in November; Hermes has about 2 years to go.**

Bill Bartlett of Direct Media Association, Victoria, described how a teleconference could have been substituted for the real conference if the air strike had been prolonged. He outlined **how conference literature could be distributed by print facsimile as well as picture by photo facsimile, out of Toronto to the conference. Selection of exhibits for art galleries by public participation might well use this method, Bartlett said. Holography might be employed in the**

future and "you could put your hand right through my back." This three-dimensional type medium does provide an eerie sense of mingling with others on the screen who turn out to be something like people in those old movies on invisible men except that they are seen and yet not there. Sculpture lends itself to fascinating depicting by holography via TV.

Bartlett conducts his experimenting on Pender Island, one of the B.C.'s Gulf Islands, and is pursuing two-way Interactive TV. His phoneline slow scan video method involves receiving TV pictures that are built-up like an etching mosaic-ally through telephone audio with the aid of a computer and electronic adapting device. This can be across the continent or across the street as Bartlett explored in a local experiment.

Yvon Dufour, former director of TVC-4 of St. Jerome, Quebec, described difficulties of operating what he called "the first community station really controlled by the community." He felt media expressions should move from small groups to the public at large. But decentralizing must be maintained.

Maureen Matthews spoke about Community Television of La Ronge, Saskatchewan. The people there have had TV for only half a year, but want it in their own language and self-selected. The extreme violence of U.S. drama relayed to them now is a distortion of the reality of southern society, she said, but many northerners believe that the southerners are really like Starsky and Hutch. In community programming the La Ronge kids had seen their own language used and so conceived it as being as good as English. A local program on damming a river was shown to the local audience "and you could hear a pin drop in the hall." But it turned out that their criticism was "devastating." She learned then that "only Northerners could do Northern footage." But there is no doubt that local programs do have appeal. Some of the local people who have worked with her, she said, are getting good.

Pat Pearce, a CRTC commissioner, felt that community programming while it "looked like a trickle, might become a flood." She told her audience to make a noise about participatory media, to make their views known. She had a "dream" that this is the country that will make it." Fibre optics is coming to provide diversity - "but how long can we wait?" Outlets right now are disappearing and if we don't act now, it may be too late. "Canadians must have a chance to do their own thing," she said.

Screenings, discussions and exhibits were held throughout the four-day conference.

• Earle Beattie